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torically from the past. Dr. Coit's method of dealing with the God-idea is far from satisfactory. He is neither a theist nor an atheist. Sometimes he appears to appreciate the moral importance of the God-idea in its purified shape, and then again he seems to consider it as an ethically indifferent idea. Should not this problem be settled by every one who undertakes to preach ethics. It appears almost as if all the leaders of the ethical culture societies underrated the ethical importance and indispensableness of thought in general and of science and philosophy in particular.

The contradictions which appear in Dr. Coit's lectures show that he is still developing. The book is full of promise and we have every reason to hope that its author will overcome the unclearness that is still lurking in his mind, and that he will grow with the work he is doing.

KPS.

FREMDES UND EIGENES AUS DEM GEISTIGEN LEBEN DER GEGENWART. By Prof. Dr. *Ludwig Büchner*. Leipsic: Max Spohr.

Opinions admittedly are still divided with respect to the laudable efforts of a large class of scientists and writers whose main object is that of presenting the results of scientific research in an intelligible, popular form. Every department of the natural sciences, geology, astronomy, even psychology and comparative philology, each and all, are now represented by able and ardent popular interpreters, who at the same time by their aggressive style and by their polemical methods not unfrequently seem to impart a kind of militant and apostolic attitude to the cause of science. It must further be admitted, that many of these writers, by the unanimous verdict of the present age, are among the most instructive, readable, and actually the most widely read authors of contemporaneous German, French, and Anglo-American literature. At first glance, it accordingly may seem rather strange, that these same popular authors should also be subjected, not unfrequently, to their commensurate share of unfair, and even offensive, popular criticism; and yet it could hardly be otherwise.

The well-known writer of these scientific and critical essays, Prof. Ludwig Büchner, affords an exceptionally striking instance of the unenviable lot of some of our most popular writers of science. In one of these essays inscribed "Meine Philosophie," Professor Büchner has been compelled to defend the arduous work of his laborious life against a decidedly unfriendly and unappreciative criticism of his philosophy and whole scientific activity, that some time ago appeared in the American *Freidenker* of Milwaukee. Prof. Büchner, with a touch of legitimate bitterness, repudiates the imputation of having been, or still being, as he himself calls it, only the "popularisator," expounder and commentator, of the theories and systems of other thinkers; that, on the contrary, in Germany and elsewhere, among the highest representatives of science, for more than thirty years Professor Büchner himself has been recognised and honored as an original worker and thinker. His book on "Force and Matter" (*Kraft und Stoff*) was published five years before Darwin's great work on the "Origin of Species." Subsequently his well-known

popular Lectures in connection with Darwin's work claim the distinguished merit, of having more widely generalised and extended the Darwinian theory by embracing the origin and evolution of man, which had until then been overlooked by Darwin himself. By the contemporary press of Germany Professor Büchner was then charged with premature rashness, and with being only a shallow, imitative scientific dilettante; but all this vituperative criticism was for ever silenced, when in the year 1871 Darwin's own work appeared on the "Descent of Man," in which Darwin himself accepted all the consequences of the theory of evolution, as set forth in Professor Büchner's Lectures, and, somewhat later, in Professor Haeckel's "Natural History of Creation" (*Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte*). Professor Büchner, moreover, is the author of the widely popular work "The Future Life and Modern Science" (*Das künftige Leben und die moderne Wissenschaft*). To deny him, accordingly, the rank and merit of a solid and original scientist and thinker, as he himself says, is to do him a signal injustice, a positive injury.

Let all this be willingly granted; but this concession, at all events, does not settle his final, mediating attitude to the entire satisfaction of philosophy, regarded as an independent science. Professor Büchner openly declares himself in favor of popular science. He maintains, that "Philosophy ought to step down from her lofty state of independent science, and henceforth content herself with the humble rôle of simply mediating the results of individual scientific research; that science, in such case, would no longer run the risk of being exposed to the scorn and contempt of the masses(!) . . . In popular scientific writings, at all times, there can and must occur contradictions, superficial estimates, even trivialities, but all this is perfectly understood by any fair-minded reader." . . . These remarks might almost tempt the reader to believe, that Professor Büchner, in his eagerness to popularise science, really ignores the value of philosophy as an independent science, and of philosophical research, irrespective of all popular results, and that the Professor wishes to inculcate a narrow and purely utilitarian estimate of philosophy. But, the impulsive Professor, of course, knows better; his mental vision embraces the entire field of the sciences, and he has written admirably and entertainingly upon almost every scientific topic, and moreover he admits, that possibly he sometimes contradicts himself.

One might further be inclined to ask, whether, in view of his self-imposed, familiar contact with the popular mind, Professor Büchner upon the whole displays the expected equanimity and broad-minded consistency when resenting the harsh criticism of antagonists, which he does with a singularly thin-skinned sensitiveness scarcely worthy of a true philosopher. In all his other works and throughout these critical essays, Professor Büchner himself shows no tender regard for the feelings of his philosophical antagonists. In the critical essay "Against Materialism," (*Wider den Materialismus*), for example,—mainly directed against Prof. Harald Höffding,—he bluntly affirms that Professor Höffding's works have produced upon him the impression that the author is a man without the philosophical and scien-

tific knowledge requisite for the solution of the problems he has ventured to approach.

From what has been said, the reader may expect to find much important, instructive, and readable matter even in Professor Büchner's critical essays, bearing upon the intellectual life of the period; but he also must be prepared to find them leavened in no small degree with the characteristic mental idiosyncrasies of their ever polemical author.

γλν.

DEACON HERBERT'S BIBLE CLASS. By *James Freeman Clarke*. Boston: Geo. H. Ellis.

This booklet is an unassuming little publication, but it is important as a symptom of the times. It was written by the late Mr. James Freeman Clarke many years ago as a series of papers for the *Christian Inquirer*. Yet it is well that they should not be forgotten and the lessons contained therein should be heeded by the clergy as well as the laity of this country. It is an attempt to make religion practical and to point out the true direction in which church-life has to develop.

There is a great truth in the general complaint made throughout the world that the religion of civilised mankind, especially Christianity in the shape it exists at present, has lost its life, its influence, and its usefulness. Our religious views must be transformed, they must be reconciled with the principles of science and must be adapted to the real needs of the people. The problem is, how to do it.

If a solution of the problem shall be found, it is certain that it will be first put into practice in the United States of America, for here the church is free. The many different churches of our country, with few exceptions (the Roman Catholic Church is perhaps the only one) are in principle churches of the people. A change of opinion, of belief, of religious conviction among the people will result in the appointment of such pastors and leaders as are in agreement with their congregations. Clergy and laity form here one organic body. The clergy are not imposed upon their congregations by the state; they are the exponents of their congregations, the representatives of the religious ideas (perhaps upon the whole of the conservative religious ideas) of their churches.

How different things are in Europe, where the state-churches of England and Germany, for instance, prevent all progress in religion, theology, and church-life.

Mr. Clarke's book, if read with these considerations in mind, shows the agencies that are at work in this country and that will (as we confidently hope) result in a new phase of religious life. Among the chapters of the book we note the following titles: "The way we helped our minister to write good sermons"; "Aim of Life"; "Temptation of Jesus"; "The Miracles"; "The Sermon on the Mount"; and others. The spirit in which the book is written is not exactly rationalistic, yet it shows in every line a strong monistic bias. For instance, the usual definition of miracles as a suspension of the laws of nature is discarded; and yet it would be erroneous to suppose that the style of the book is marked by a radical tendency. Not